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ABSTRACT

Hypothesizing that metaphoric portrayals of students as consumers/customers should cause consternation, this paper constitutes a pragmatic examination of metaphor and focuses on how the choice of metaphors implicates policies and practices. It begins by tracing the philosophical development of the description of students as consumers/customers, and explains its antithetical nature with relation to the service-learning initiative. The paper suggests that several alternative metaphoric possibilities and invigoration of participatory learning may reduce the pernicious implications of the student-as-customer metaphor, through such practices as enriching the metaphoric repertoire surrounding education and broadening the vision of students by recognizing their roles in service-learning. Contains 35 references. (RS)

Educational Consumerism: Etiology and Antidotes

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Educational Consumerism: Etiology and Antidotes

Although metaphors seem a natural and often welcome accompaniment to abstract thought, metaphoric portrayals of students should cause consternation. Why does American culture resort to metaphorical renderings of education? Why can't students just be students? This essay traces the philosophical development of the description of students as consumers/customers. The consumer metaphor seems antithetical to the inculcation of social responsibility, a task central to the service-learning initiative. Several alternative metaphoric possibilities and invigoration of participatory learning may reduce the pernicious implications of the student-as-customer metaphor. A productive alternative would be to enrich the metaphoric repertoire surrounding education, broadening the vision of students by recognizing their roles as revealed through service-learning.

This study constitutes a pragmatic examination of metaphor insofar as the focus of inquiry is how the choice of metaphors implicates policies and practices. The pragmatic aspects of any metaphor deal with how it “serves the practical function of focusing arguments, and constituting arguments” (Ausmus, 1998, pp. 80-81) that justify actions. More precisely, the following discussion addresses the prevalence of commercial marketplace metaphors in education, their roles in shaping educational practice, and their effects on how education is perceived.

The Nature of the Student-Customer

Although much ink has been spilled to proclaim that students are considered customers, less attention has been paid to delineating the kinds of customers who inhabit higher education. Creech (1994) observes that student-customers rarely drive educational improvements because many are satisfied with the least demanding curriculum available for the dollar. In the

marketplace, the customers already know what they want. They have very clear ideas of what constitutes excellent performance. But some customers simply shop the sale racks, settling for the cheapest product that suits immediate purposes. Some students do shop for quality, and they know that rigorous standards ultimately equip them well to adapt to challenges beyond the classroom. The bargain basement students, on the other hand, contribute little and perhaps demand even less. This attitude does “buy into” metaphors derived from commercial transactions. Since a vendor merely provides a commodity, the student need do nothing except passively receive the goods. “When we tell students that knowledge is a commodity, we tell them that learning requires no effort beyond paying for it” (wa Mwachofi et al., 1995, p. 2).

The distinction between quality seekers and bargain hunters has other implications for educational practice. Some students, never having been exposed to substantive academic work, may equate quality with ease and comfort. The resultant definition of quality renders education a one-way street: “The burden is on the ‘vendor’ to provide customer satisfaction” (wa Mwachofi et al., 1995, p. 2). Such a conception grossly distorts the nature of education. Adopting the philosophy of the market, students may think “that a University education requires no more effort or involvement than making a purchase” (Rodeheaver, 1994, p. 2). Indeed, the language of passivity and spectatorship infuses talk about education. Students “attend” or “go to” college. Rarely do discussions include how students might “contribute to” or “shape the future” of the institution. Students “get” or “receive” grades, diplomas, and degrees that institutions “give.” More active verbs such as “earn” or “work for” hardly sprinkle conversations that bypass what one does to merit the rewards of an education.

Many, if not most, students want to become more active participants in their own education. But the consumer empowerment that accompanies marketplace language is illusory.

Customer satisfaction might fuel the drive to improve quality, but the burden to adapt lies solely in the hands of the provider. Instead of a mutual transaction in the highest economic sense--with responsibility and accountability shared by customer and vendor--the market relationship becomes lopsided. The designated seller constantly tries to adapt to its customers, who have no obligation other than to express their preferences.

Paradoxically, the same metaphoric framework that touts quality and consumer empowerment ends up devaluing the educational experience. Once the market becomes the primary source of educational initiatives, education has only instrumental value. Kant and, much later, members of the Frankfurt School condemned reduction of people to means. Horkheimer (1974), associated such instrumental reason with the reduction of people to objects, fostering the genocidal mentality of the Holocaust. When people were reduced to objects, they could be manipulated at will to serve the ultimate goals of the manipulators. Defining education in terms of its market value certainly does not fuel genocide. It does, however, drastically underestimate the functions education can perform. Service-learning counters the instrumentalism and individualism that characterizes contemporary higher education. According to the instrumental ideal, the more an educational program can promote personal career goals, the more successful its graduates can be. Responsibility to others, which should increase as one acquires more wealth and power to wield influence, rarely gets attention aside from platitudes in mission statements (Ehrlich, 1999, p. 8). When service-learning enters the picture, pursuit of personal gain fits into the larger context of how such gain might contribute to causes that benefit others.

The attenuation of social responsibilities in the face of expanding consumer rights reinforces the disjunction of rights and duties symptomatic of a growing “apathy and narcissism” at the expense of public service (Etzioni in Evers, pp. 145-146). Proponents of total quality

management, for example, come very close to rendering quality synonymous with economy.

Sutcliffe and Pollock (1992), who explicitly equate the customer with the student, define quality as providing whatever

- “Satisfies the customer
- Is as cheap as possible
- Can be achieved in time to meet delivery requirements.” (p. 12)

Presumably the third component, derived from industrial production models, means that educational institutions can respond to urgent personnel needs of prospective employers.

Clearly, most educational institutions find that decisions must be made primarily in light of cost limitations, especially since customer satisfaction and rapid response almost always involve more resources.

One reason the Market enjoys metaphorical ascendancy is that many forces combine to make it the lingua franca of educational practice. In the competition for resources, often a zero-sum competition that translates into scrambling for dollars, a Market orientation suits the environment of economic scarcity. The Market represents the mother tongue of corporate America. To appease those who wield the purse strings, educators are implored to confirm rather than challenge the prevalent values of the Marketeers. Education thus is expected to reinforce the values and priorities of those who have economic power, and compliance is rewarded with financial support.

The typical components of quality fail to mention values that are shaped by concerns and commitments outside a dollar-driven marketplace. The human values communication supposedly encourages would be ignored or undermined in favor of ideas and techniques that “sell”—in the twin senses of popularity and revenue generation. Most educators and students

would like to think that the skills developed in a basic course generalize to situations where personal development and not financial gain is at stake. If the mighty marketplace exerts hegemonic control over education, then students might mistakenly expect tangible, probably immediate gain whenever they apply their communication skills. Without that promise and without alternatives to the market-driven system of rewards, what will motivate our students to improve and excel?

Notwithstanding value-laden corporate mission statements, the market mentality sidesteps the sense of responsibility and commitment at the heart of communication. Instead, “Education becomes an economic transaction for immediate personal gain, rather than individual transformation for self and community betterment that, at its best, liberates the student and may produce its most powerful results long after the student has left the classroom” (wa Mwachofi et al., 1995, p. 2). A market-driven model of communication emphasizes what students can “get out” of the market and other people. From its roots in the Greek polis, communication has attended (perhaps not exclusively, but emphatically) to how communicators can add to public life. The speaker’s moral habits were a dimension of ethos (Bitzer, 1959) which Aristotle identified as the most influential aspect of persuasion. Additionally, logos infused public deliberation with rationality, thereby transforming physical aggression into argumentation. Whatever might have changed over the centuries, these constituents of communication do and should remain. We should not harbor illusions of altruistic persuaders defying all market pressures in a capitalist society. Nor should we adopt the cynical market mentality that values lie outside marketplace transactions. A healthier view of communication would take account of “real life” market concerns and “ivory tower” moral commitments.

The market value of public speaking does creep into justifications for studying communication. Gronbeck et al. (1997) begin with an objective that promises intrinsic rather than market value: to build community and recognize diversity (pp. 5-10). Community and diversity are treated as intrinsic goods. Then, in a short section titled “The Need for Speech Training in the Age of Diversity,” the authors state: “Unless you have the speaking talents necessary to engage in committee discussions, presentations to clients, and interactions with your managers, you may be in trouble on the job” (p. 10). The text cites a study of “over one thousand corporate leaders” who identified communication courses as the most useful in preparing students for a career (p. 10). The flip side receives attention as well (p. 10): “Put another way, far more people are fired due to an inability to communicate or handle basic human relations than are fired due to technical incompetence.” The first of the book’s many “Communication Datelines” highlighting research on a specific topic addresses “Communication and Your Career.” The insert points to communication as appropriate preparation for a number of careers. “No matter what you will do after graduation, think of communication skills training as training for your life’s work” (p. 19). Many students would consider the Gronbeck et al. (1997, pp. 10-11) discussion of communication’s career relevance to be more important than the more abstract principles of diversity.

Osborn and Osborn (1997) claim that the study of public speaking confers personal, social, and cultural benefits. Under personal benefits, the text lists “Growth as a Public Speaker” and “Practical Benefits.” The practical benefits include, but are not limited to, career advancement. Oral communication skills are critical to “success at work” and to “getting and holding a desirable position” (p. 7). The concepts of success and desirability remain undefined, but students presumably could equate both with financial gain, a principal sign of success.

Business metaphors fit the educational enterprise poorly, especially if they are used as global metaphors for the entire educational process. Lyons (1988), lamenting the state of higher education in the 1970s, had difficulty identifying the socially useful tasks that supposed entitled many professors to publicly subsidized incomes. For education to fit the model of business--that is, business as it ought to be conducted--professors should be rewarded according to their performance. Performance-based funding is far from novel, but Lyons (1988) argues that the purported prestige of one's academic reputation, regardless of social utility, earns recognition and reward in academe. When professors, especially at research institutions, teach useful practical skills such as basic written composition or oral communication, these tasks are deemed basic. Outside academia, "basic" means "fundamental," but the "basic" courses are deemed too "base" for senior faculty to teach. These courses, often the only exposure non-majors will have to a given department, tend to be farmed out to graduate students and temporary faculty. Lyons' line of reasoning should resonate with academics. After all, how many endowed professorships include teaching introductory courses? How often are distinguished visiting professors urged to teach or even to visit with freshmen who may not yet have had sustained contact with a faculty member in their field of study?

If "basic" denotes social utility, then it remains difficult to envision how such usefulness could be measured. Certainly some subjects of study are basic in a minimalist sense that students should learn them in order to function in society. Communication (oral and written: speaking, listening, reading, writing) and pre-algebraic mathematics immediately surface as fundamental to any adult seeking to gain employment and avoid deception. Beyond this level, however, how can social utility be assessed?

Employing the tools to measure educational performance, however, generates backlash from students. As Bourdieu et al. observe in their extensive research on higher education in France, the more explicit evaluative criteria become and the more precisely their work is assessed, the more students may complain of “an aggravation of rigour and severity” (1965/1994, p. 14). Increased precision, a laudable and indeed necessary means to measure quality, may foster resentment. This reaction becomes especially likely among students whose work never or rarely has had to withstand close, critical scrutiny. A paradox thus arises. On one hand, students may justifiably desire more explicit criteria for evaluating their performance. On the other hand, once those criteria are employed the evaluator may be accused of nit-picking or applying undue rigor.

Service Learning as an Antidote to Consumerism

The tendency to describe education in commercial terms should invigorate the search for the most appropriate ways to conceptualize the role of education in a democracy. Jacoby (1996a, pp. 319-320) sees the widespread adoption of practices borrowed from business, such as Total Quality Management and strategic planning, as opportunities to advocate greater rewards for service. Other commentators are less sanguine about these trends. Weigert (1998) decries the displacement of broader, civic notions of education by a consumerist mentality. She laments that “the all-pervasive metaphor of the individual as a consumer crowds out such metaphors as citizen or neighbor, which capture and celebrate our interrelationships” (Weigert, 1998, p. 3; emphasis in original). Indeed, the “lip service” academic institutions give to “the ideal of knowledge for its own sake and the common good” contrasts sharply with the stark reality that academics often adopt the corporate ideology of individual prosperity without concomitant community responsibility (Mendel-Reyes, 1998, p. 34). An allied risk of the consumerist

viewpoint is to treat whoever assumes the consumer role as an individual whose desires should be satisfied, but the legitimacy and quality of these desires escapes attention. Additionally, consumers take little active role in creating products and services, whereas everyone in the educational process shares a stake and becomes a participant in the educational process (McMillan and Cheney, 1996). Service-learning offers a much more interactive picture of education, with faculty, students, and community members collaborating to achieve goals. Unlike the consumer model which gives the illusion that student-customers actually control the educational process (Cheney, McMillan, and Schwartzman, 1997), service-learning legitimately empowers students by making them agents of social change.

Although service-learning has been embraced by educational institutions, civic organizations, and corporations, it straddles the historic tensions between educating students for democratic action and equipping students with skills transferable to the workplace (Lisman, 1998, p. 27). Ideally, the citizen educated for democracy constantly strives for civic improvements, urging and agitating for changes that could move toward social justice for populations that remain marginalized by governmental and commercial practices. By contrast, the prospective employee educated for the workforce acquires skills that would enhance efficacy as an advocate for the interests of the employer. The difference between these orientations sometimes reduces to the prioritization of equity or efficiency, and both are needed if democracy, at least a capitalist version, is to survive.

Lisman (1998) contends that the preoccupation with “consumerist politics” is incompatible with genuine service-learning. The consumerist view holds that the distribution of resources results from market mechanisms that, while not always fair, do self-correct if left to themselves. This laissez-faire attitude toward social problems encourages the minimum

governmental intervention in economic and social life. In this atmosphere, service-learning efforts can replace the perceived need to address these issues through concerted governmental or corporate activism. Although the extant political and economic system might cause inequities, it also includes a ready supply of service-learners ready to redress them. Thus there is no need to confront the forces of injustice within representative democracy as long as socially conscious students can be mustered to patch shortcomings seen as affecting particular groups rather than as indigenous weaknesses in socioeconomic norms and practices (Lisman, 1998).

The roots and fruits of consumerism extend further. The idea that education should prepare students for the workforce certainly has merit, but the capacity to work productively in the workplace should extend to productive efforts in public life (Lisman, 1998, p. 65). In fact, if future employees lack awareness of their social obligations, they could act irresponsibly in a corporate environment, failing to recognize their organization's responsibilities to the communities it serves. Service-learning helps remedy the narrow vocational focus on learning as the acquisition of specific knowledge and skills obtainable only through specific programs of study. By calling on participants to use a broad range of intellectual and emotional resources, service-learning projects reinforce the ideal of a liberal education as combining complementary ideas from many different sources. Service-learning is inherently interdisciplinary insofar as it encourages students and faculty to pool resources to address community needs, transcending departmental strictures (Eyler and Giles, 1999). Efforts to develop effective service-learning programs should reduce the tendency of departments to become compartments, insulating students and faculty in one field from the benefits of studying outside their area of focus. The more liberally educated student, for example, should become more functional in the workplace

as well by being more able to integrate diverse bodies of knowledge and cope with complex problems.

Although service-learning has the potential to reduce consumerist tendencies, the evaluative standards employed by the Corporation for National Service are replete with metaphors borrowed from the TQM movement in corporate America. The first three criteria for programs engaged in service are:

1. Our “customers” are the reason we exist. We must stay attuned to their needs and strive always to exceed their expectations.
2. Volunteers, participants and staff are customers too. They must be motivated, trained and satisfied if they are to serve our customers well.
3. It is not enough to talk about customer satisfaction. We must set measurable goals, communicate them throughout our organization, regularly and systematically gauge our progress against these goals, and take action to continuously improve our performance.

(quoted in Mintz and Hesser, 1996, pp. 32-33)

Much attention has been devoted to the difficulties attendant to transferring the customer metaphor to educational contexts (Schwartzman, 1995; McMillan and Cheney, 1996; Cheney, McMillan, and Schwartzman, 1997). Far less commentary has focused on the incompatibility of this metaphoric framework with service-learning.

Consumerism obscures the extent of reciprocity between server and served (Mintz and Hesser, 1996, pp. 35-37). Barber (1990) balks at modeling civic activity after the marketplace. Like many others, he sees service as a way to offer models of social engagement that can depart from the competitive, adversarial relations that infuse commercial transactions. While education may help prepare students for the workplace, the value of learning extends beyond its market

value. Rhoads (1997) distinguishes two senses of Dewey's call for experiential education. Vocational preparation, while important, does not exhaust the mission of education. Additionally, students should "better understand themselves and how they fit within a democratic society" (Rhoads, 1997, p. 210).

Alternative Metaphoric Frameworks

During a time that language of the marketplace has supplanted discourse of the polis, when students are described as customers instead of learners (Schwartzman, 1995; McMillan and Cheney, 1996) and economic acquisitiveness overshadows intellectual inquisitiveness, it is refreshing to find textbooks that configure public speaking as a cooperative rather than a corporate venture. This section examines several metaphoric alternatives to the market-based framework of consumers. Two standards of the basic public speaking course, Osborn and Osborn's Public Speaking (1997) and Gronbeck, McKerrow, Ehninger, and Monroe's Principles and Types of Speech Communication (1997), prioritize the paradoxically communal aspect of communication: to recognize and honor diversity among people and opinions while attempting to transcend these differences to achieve understanding.

Osborn and Osborn (1997) approach the task metaphorically. They replace the venerable Shannon and Weaver (1949) mathematical model of communication—depersonalized sources, receivers, signals, and noise—with the portrayal of communicators as climbers attempting to chip away and ascend the mountain of interference. Later, Osborn and Osborn describe students as builders who must choose the most appropriate and durable organizational structures. Finally, students become weavers of arguments as they interlace different types of proof and supporting material into a sustainable position.

Osborn and Osborn's metaphors have important pedagogical implications. In the tradition of Emersonian and masculinist self-reliance, students are customarily urged to "do their own work" by crafting presentations in an intellectual vacuum. The metaphors in Public Speaking share a central quality: if taken seriously, they require students to enlist the aid of others. Mountain climbing is riskiest when attempted alone. One person usually does not have all the skills needed to build a house. Durable fabrics are woven from blends of material. Rather than dwell on the metaphors themselves, teachers and students might concentrate on the process-oriented approach to communication they imply.

Perhaps the most crucial lesson from these metaphors is that they should fuel the intellectual curiosity to experiment. Climbing, building, and weaving are not one-shot attempts. The very nature of those activities prepares us for occasional falls, structural collapses, and tearing along the way. Classrooms need to be "safe zones" where students can experiment and fail without becoming failures. A mountain climber never places all her weight on a new foothold; the speaker should experiment with different approaches before settling on one that has withstood the scrutiny of sample audiences. Textbooks can assist in this task by including more examples of presentations as works in progress. English composition texts show draft after draft of the same essay as it evolves into a finished product. Similarly, public speaking textbooks should show the stages through which a presentation develops.

Just as a novice quilter would be discouraged by seeing only finished, exquisitely crafted quilts, an inexperienced speaker needs to discover how to approach the level of the speeches included as samples in the texts. Chapters on presentational aids, for example, might show several possible ways to illustrate a point in a speech, then explain why one option should be chosen over others. In a word, our textbooks need to foster the spirit of creative experimentation

by showing how speakers might try many methods—and sometimes fail—to communicate. Perhaps the process of communication deserves greater attention by delving into the changes speakers make as their preparation progresses. If I. A. Richards (1991) accurately described rhetoric as “a study of misunderstanding and its remedies” (p. 106), then students need to see more of the trials and errors involved in climbing toward, building, and weaving communication.

Experimentation calls for recognizing different approaches, and a greater commitment to diversity could fuel creative ways to test ideas. The dialectic between unity and diversity is especially central in a nation whose very motto, “E Pluribus Unum,” reflects the delicate balance. The role of speech in fostering community, the “imperative to speak to become one” (Gronbeck et al., p. 9), exacts a price: some identities and communities will be privileged above others. Before teachers wholeheartedly encourage all students to celebrate membership in a community, they should consider which communities they wish to build. The value of a community may be measured by its willingness to tolerate other communities that differ from it. Suppose a student hails from an oppressive, bigoted town where people of color are assumed to be servants and women are implored to be silent, bear children, and cook. Must or should such a community be proclaimed or displayed proudly in every speech? Calls for celebrating diversity without an attendant scale of values demonstrates a naive optimism about free expression. Everyone belongs to multiple communities, and these shifting memberships emerge in adaptational tactics such as code switching to match speech patterns to the audience. What variables govern the selection of the community to be advocated in a speech? Does mere membership in a community entitle one to be a spokesperson for that community?

Rather than referring to the “Age of Diversity” (Gronbeck et al., p. 10), diversity could be envisioned as central to creative experimentation. The Gronbeck et al. text recognizes that

communication must respect differences yet transcend them in moving toward consensus. On a more concrete level, however, how can students strike the balance between consensus and diversity when preparing a presentation?

Textbooks can equip students with specific tools to cope with and utilize diversity. When examining sample outlines or speeches, a textbook could prompt students to account for perspectives they might have overlooked. Standard prompts could include: Does this point account for women as well as men in the audience? Are the examples relevant to experiences of international students? Is this source familiar to non-traditional students? These sorts of considerations may not always apply to a homogeneous classroom audience. They should, however, become part of the preparation process that incorporates diversity as part of the method of constructing presentations. Even when addressing a totally homogeneous audience, the listeners and presenter should be aware that the perspectives in the presentation take into account the larger context of diverse populations beyond those who are physically present. No audience exists in a vacuum; everyone is embedded in and has a stake in a multicultural community (Goldzwig, 1998). Inclusion of speeches in progress could concentrate on how the same speech would change when the audience composition changes. None of the major public speaking textbooks contains an example of the same speech revised to appeal to different audiences. As a result, sensitivity remains an abstract imperative that students may have difficult implementing.

Perhaps climbers also should be excavators, digging to destabilize antiquated assumptions and damaging stereotypes. As excavators, students will be called upon to unearth taken-for-granted exclusion or marginalization of certain populations. The tattered trifurcation of fact, value, and policy propositions (Gronbeck et al., p. 10) may need to give way to an acknowledgment that communicators inhabit an ethosystem, a world permeated by values not

exhaustively defined in monetary terms. Communication is inherently value-laden in the priorities it establishes and the perspectives it privileges. Humans are valuing animals. The more those values are recognized in the process of communication, the less communication resembles a commodity with solely commercial value.

Metaphors Attendant to Service-Learning

Concerned that communities might be treated as outsiders or guests beholden to academics gracious enough to serve them, Goodman and MacNeil (1999) suggest the metaphor of family. A family's well-being requires mutual dependence among all members without creating hierarchies of value. The community, students, and academic institutions participate in a familial relationship because each contributes something to the other's development. Unlike commercial relationships governed by contracts and caveats, healthy familial relationships foster open dialogues among equals. Consumerism obscures the extent of reciprocity between server and served (Mintz and Hesser, 1996, pp. 35-37). The familial attitude has far greater affinity with service-learning than with the commercial mindset. But the metaphor of family demands further scrutiny, both as an alternative to consumerism and as an apt description of service-learning.

Service-learning, insofar as it escapes from self-centered commercialism, could resolve the paradoxical pulls of academic freedom (with its price of ivory tower irrelevance to the surrounding community) and responsibility to an institution's many stakeholders. Phrased in terms more familiar to communication, service-learning enlarges the scope of academic conversation to include more stakeholders as participants (Goodman and MacNeil, 1999). Indirect evidence suggests that service-learning and materialistic acquisitiveness are

incompatible. Astin's (1999/1996, p. 594) research shows that commitment to service tends to be lowest at institutions that place "resource acquisition" as a top priority.

The stakeholders in service-learning, however, might not qualify as family. The family metaphor implies unwavering, unconditional loyalty—a dangerous condition if not reciprocated. Contrary to the inextricable bonds a family implies, a more critical attitude toward the communities forged through service reveals other possibilities. Service-learning does teach how to form partnerships between academics and communities, but it also should teach how to redefine or sever those partnerships. Far from abandonment, severing a relationship with a community organization could signify the organization's maturation into a self-sufficient entity. Thus the severance becomes analogous to the maturation of a dependent child into a responsible adult. Although families expect loyalty and obedience, the service relationship invites a less hierarchical arrangement of cooperation so that the community comes to rely less and less on external support. In a healthy family, the children grow up, become more independent, and in their turn can assume the role of parenting. Improperly constructed service-learning efforts risk becoming dysfunctional families, with the beneficiaries of service defined as perpetual children, "dependents" in the sense of never learning to help themselves.

Concerns about dependency motivate exploration of a different metaphor: students as partners with the community in addressing unmet social needs (Barber and Battistoni, 1993). The partnership model suggests that academic institutions solicit advice from the community about how to educate students as well as provide advice to the community about how to tackle social issues. A partnership restores conditionality to the service relationship, thus recognizing that community relations are negotiated rather than assumed. Instead of being the knights in shining armor who rescue communities from their own mistakes, service-learners recognize the

lessons they can learn from the community. The relationship is a two-way street, with the community teaching lessons unavailable in traditional classroom settings. In the words of Barbara Jacoby, “Service-learning encourages students to do things with others rather than for them” (1996b, p. 8). The partnership mentality counters tendencies to use the community as a laboratory to test academic formulas for solving social ills (Eyler and Giles, 1999, p. 179).

Lessons in Manipulating Metaphors

Any adoption of a metaphor represents one choice among many possible metaphoric and literal descriptive alternatives. Each descriptive option implicates discursive rules and practices attendant to its use. No metaphoric description is automatic. Its adoption and use are voluntary, although a particular metaphoric framework may be “given” in the sense that its embeddedness in custom may make it seem to be the “only” choice. To escape from the tyranny of metaphors, it might help to explore alternative metaphoric frameworks. Sontag’s (1990) recommendation simply to stop using metaphors that glorify disease carries little force unless some other descriptive means are available to clarify whatever falls within that metaphoric domain.

To resist the hegemony of one family of metaphors, and to restore the breadth of imagination that an ingrained metaphoric framework may have narrowed, metaphors should be treated as provisional and not exhaustive. Rather than introduce alternative metaphors, as suggested previously, the task here is to press embedded metaphors to their limits. At what point do the accepted metaphors break down as accurate descriptions? Tensional theories of metaphor stress that metaphors highlight similarities but also call forth differences between figurative language and what it describes (Wheelwright, 1962). By observing dissimilarities as well as resemblances between commercial markets and education, the metaphor does not become reified

as a complete, literal description of reality. In this way, the almighty Market no longer serves as the ultimate arbiter of values in education.

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